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RELIGION AND THE CHINESE PEASANT STRUGGLE

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- COMMUNIST CHINA -

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## RELIGION AND THE CHINESE PEASANT STRUGGLE

-Communist China-

Following is a translation of an article by Yueh Sheng, Lung Sheng-yun and Ho Ling-hsiu in Jen-min Jih-pao, Peiping, 17 October 1960, page 7.

### I. How to Explain Logically that Religion is the "Opiate of the People"

Religion is one form of social consciousness. It is a reflection of the objective world in the minds of men, but it is not a true scientific reflection. Religion does not recognize the world as it really is, but is a distorted, confusing and erroneous reflection of the objective world. Thus we say "religion distorts world outlook." From the religious point of view, the winds, storms, thunder and lightning in nature, as well as the fate of human beings, are governed by a mysterious and supernatural power. Thus, human beings are helpless in the face of this automatism in nature and society. They have no choice but leave their fates in the hands of this supernatural power. Religion is passive in its attitudes towards natural catastrophes and social inequalities. Religion prevents the people from recognizing the world correctly, and it also obstructs the people's efforts to change this world. Because of the peculiar characteristics of religion, it gained re-invigorating power in the process of class-struggle in our society. It has received the support of the reactionary governing class and has become a most potent spiritual weapon in controlling the people.

In a class-conscious society all the reactionary governing classes have to master two basic skills in order to protect their own positions. The two skills involved are how to be a successful executor and missionary. The first skill is used in suppressing physically the protests of the persecuted class; the latter skill acts to dull the determination to struggle. Religion is of service to the exploiting class. No matter what form it takes or how many changes it develops, it has one common characteristic which is the advocacy of class harmony. This is of course a clear cut case of apologizing for the governing class. The people are taught to be meek and obedient towards the oppressors while at the same time bear their own miseries in peace. Practically all religions carve a beautiful picture of paradise in the coming world for all toilers because they want the people in this world to endure their miseries and exploitation without any qualm. It is through this propaganda that religion hopes to kill the revolutionary spirit or reduce the enthusiasm for revolution, so as to cease all revolu-

tionary struggle. Thus the exploiters and oppressors can continue their rule peacefully. Therefore, we say that religion is one form of mental oppression and the opiate of the people.

In the history of China we have had many religions. Amongst them, the most influential are Taoism, Buddhism, and Christianity.

Taoism was born and developed in China. Its first scripture -- "T'ai-p'ing-ching" [T'ai-p'ing Classics] -- pays lip service to the exploiting class. It regards the high and the low, the aristocrat and the commoners and the class system in society as an unchanging way of nature, prearranged by a supernatural power, which cannot be changed by the power of men. It defends most emphatically the system of exploitation of man by his brothers by stating that the production of food by the peasants and the creation of wealth by the slaves are arranged in Heaven and man should not meddle with the process of nature nor disarrange the cosmic order. In order that the oppressed may forever feel complacent in their most miserable and tragic fate, it further advocated the comforting theories of "being resigned to a fate of misery and poverty." It said: "Contentment in poverty and misery shall ensue; to reach higher is contrary to the ways of nature." It further states: "The heavens and the earth will be in concord if all the people and slaves are obedient and do no evil." Such theories in the T'ai-p'ing Classics set the fundamental basis for the Taoist philosophy. Throughout the changes in regimes and dynasties, their basic philosophy has not changed essentially. Let us look again at Yun-chi-ch'i-chien, which was published about the 8th or 9th century. Although there was some change in its religious teachings, the core of its philosophy still retains the poisonous influence. It states that misery and poverty are strokes of fate; "We cannot escape from it, nor should we complain. Only the intelligent ones become the instrument of the eternal way. They are happy in their fate and do not bewail their misery and poverty." These teachings also have many commandments such as "Thou shalt not be discontented with misery and poverty; nor shalt thou forcefully ask for luxury and riches"; "Thou shalt not plot against the emperor or engage in treasonous acts against the country"; etc. There are many other teachings. For example, on the subject of the "medicine for a hundred cures" are prescribed "repay-love-with-hate medicine," "resist-anger-in-the-face-of-insult medicine," "live-in-complacency-of-misery-and-poverty-without-complaints medicine," etc. It is not necessary to analyze the reactionary functions of such religious teachings, as they are very obvious.

The most amusing thing is that Christianity, although born thousands of miles away, is strikingly similar in nature with Taoism. Although Christianity was born in the lower stratum of society it has endeavored in every possible way, since it was proclaimed the national religion of the Roman Empire, to preach and defend the exploitation system. It has advocated the necessity of the class system in addition to commending cowardice, self-pity, gentleness, obedience and weakness. Furthermore, Christianity calls upon all her believers to love their enemies, bless them and pray for them instead of hating them. In the Sixth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke: "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which



despitefully use you." This is not sufficient; he further taught the people, "And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other, and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also." All these were proclaimed as the will of God. It is very obvious that if all the workers were to act according to the will of God, there would be no protest movements or revolutionary struggles by the people.

The function of religion is, however, limited. No matter how hard it tries to preach the harmony of the classes, the contradictions between the classes cannot be resolved; no matter how anxious it is to teach the workers to be obedient and patient, under the cruel exploitation and oppression of the governing class, it is impossible for the workers to be either obedient or patient. There have been thousands of uprisings in history to protest such exploitations and oppressions. From this, we can see that although religion may have poisoned the consciousness of the people or effected the struggles of the people, it has, nevertheless, failed to move this determination in the people for revolution, nor has it succeeded in extinguishing the revolutionary flame.

## II. What Are the Characteristics of Religion Which Are of Advantage to the the Struggle of the Peasants?

The majority of the working class has not only broken through the confinement of the religious ideological barrier, it has participated in many large-scale uprisings. In the process of the uprisings, it further took advantage of religion. This was made possible, on the one hand because the peasants were not atheists. They worshipped God and believed in a supernatural power. On the other hand, there were certain factors in the religious ideology which could be used to good advantage. We all know that religion poisons our senses in the form of deceit and trickery; thus, it has to enclose the poisonous factors in a cover of attractive sugar coating. The "sugar coating" maintains the principles of equality, respect for the brighter sides of life, and a yearning for Paradisiacal happiness. Needless to say, such ideologies can easily coincide with the desires of the revolutionary masses. For instance, religion preaches the equality for all in Paradise, but the peasants instead want further to have equality on this earth. Religion preaches hypocritically the love for all things bright and beautiful and the avoidance of darkness and evil, but the peasants utilize this principle to develop their revolutionary ideology of fighting for their own welfare and struggling against oppression and exploitation. Religion comforts the oppressed with "heaven," but the peasants utilize this idea to visualize a beautiful picture of the future. Religion defends the present system of government and the divine rule of those in authority, but the peasants themselves proclaim divine rule from heaven when they are struggling for political power. In the history of China, some of the peasant uprisings have utilized religion to good advantage. During the last years of the Tung-han Dynasty, the Huang-chin uprising took advantage of Taoism. Near the end of the Pei-sung Dynasty, the Fang-la uprising utilized the "Mo-ni" [Manichaeism] religion. Before the downfall of the Yuan Dynasty,

Han Shan-t'ung and Liu Fu-tang both utilized the principles of the "Pai-lien" White-Lotus religion to incite incidents. More recently, the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion utilized the principles of Christianity and the Boxer Uprising also took advantage of the "Pai-lien" religion. From the point of view of Chinese history, the utilization of religion in the peasant's struggle usually takes place under two circumstances. First, the religion which has been of service to the governing class and has been deeply imbedded as a tradition amongst the people was modernized to create a religion that satisfied the needs of the people. This new religion was altogether different from the old form under the governing class. Second, the religion which had been strictly tabooed, yet was secretly circulating amongst the people, was used as an active force to organize and incite the people to uprising. This had a dynamic impact on the organization of the peasant's struggle.

All of these religions played an active role in the struggle of the peasants only because they were different from the religion of the governing class. The new characteristics of these religions are as follows:

First, all of these religions possessed an intensely strong tendency towards conflicts. This was revealed quite conspicuously in their interpretations of "universal peace." The governing-class usually interpreted "universal peace" as "when the three classes are in their respective places, universal peace will prevail," "when the stars shine brightly," "when the six forces sway in one direction, when all nations and tribes advance on one track, when the ruler is enlightened and the goods are plentiful," etc., or in a similar manner. Further samples from the Yun-chi-ch'i-chien, with quotes from the T'ai-p'ing Classics "Ch'ao-chia-pu," read: "The great conflicts are at rest. Much work can be accomplished and virtue is returning over all in her right place. Such a state may be appropriately named universal peace." But in the religious ideology created by the peasants, the concept of "universal peace" was altogether different. Near the end of the Yuan Dynasty there was a folktale among the people which read in part: "The peaceful people kill all the non-peaceful people and only after they are all killed can we have peace." Another example from the "peace and salvation song" of the God worshippers read, "Eliminate all witches and devils to achieve peace in the universe." It also stated, "When the witches and devils turn into ashes and the universe is clear, when the country is united, then we can enjoy universal peace." Such interpretations are void of class harmony and, in fact, breathe an intense air of conflict. Aside from these, there was the Ming religion which preached the conflict of light and darkness. It was said that during the second state of the conflict, light would overcome darkness. As a further example, the God worshippers, although based on Christianity, did not teach their believers to love their enemies. On the contrary, they grouped all oppressors and exploiters into one class and called them witches and devils. These witches and devils were clearly labeled as "the common enemies of the sisters and brothers in this world and it is never too soon to eliminate all of them."

Second, these religions did not apologize for the governing authorities. They were in fact defending the revolutionary activities of the peasant class. For instance, near the end of the Tung-han Dynasty, the



T'ai-p'ing religion preached "The blue sky is dead (symbolic of the ruling emperor); the yellow sky prevails (the people). During the year of Chia-tze, there will be good fortune for everyone all over the world." The anti-Yuan revolution led by Liu Fu-tung took advantage of "the coming of the Mi-la Buddha and the birth of an enlightened emperor" and Liu proclaimed himself as the divine choice. Christians preached that God once gave Hung Hsiu-chuan a divine book, a set of precious doctrines, and a big seal. With these, God ordered Hung to destroy all the devils and witches on earth. In the I-wo (Boxer) group handbook, it stated: "God strengthen our fists, the fists of the boxers. Unfortunately the foreign devils are causing troubles on our plains .... The Gods are angry, the fairies vexed. Thus they are all incarnated as human beings to preach the word." From Chan-yu, "In the sea of bitterness there is no hope, the little Gods scatter in confusion. Then suddenly there arises eight thousand to ten thousand divine soldiers. They immediately dispell the foreigners to create a new world."

Third, because of the fact that these religions were all characterized by an intense conflicting nature and were all defending the revolutionary activities of the peasant class, they were prohibited by the governing class. These religions were accused of witchcraft, superstitions, unorthodoxy, religious banditry, etc., and subjected to cruel persecution. Thus, all religions which were utilized by the peasant conflicts were conducted in a most secretive manner.

Forth, these religions advocated a determined struggle against the enemy while, on the other hand, they preached peace and harmony in internal relationships. For instance, the T'ai-p'ing religion during the end of the Tung-han Dynasty, the Ming religion during the Sung Dynasty, the Pai-lien religion in the Ch'ing Dynasty, and Christianity in the T'ai-P'ing T'ien-kuo [Kingdom of Heaven] were more or less based on these principles.

Fifth, all of these religions were in favor of the suppression of such desires as simple burial, light diet, abstinence from alcohol and women, etc. Such rejections of human nature do have a positive effect on the peasant's struggle. Engels dwelled on this point in much detail in his "The Peasants' Struggle in Germany." From outward manifestations, the religions of the governing classes do at times advocate simple diets, frugality, abstinence from alcohol and women, etc. They are, however, merely one way of defrauding the people. They believe that the more you suffer in this life, the better it would be in the life hereafter. The function of such religious ideologies in society is definitely reactionary.

### III. Is It Necessary to Combine the Peasant Struggle With Religion?

Quite a few people believe that religion is a necessity for the peasants' struggle. For instance, Comrade Sun Tsu-min said: "Because the peasants in feudalistic societies lack their own community organizations, they turn to religion, as it is the only form of organization known to them." He attributed the extended period of preparatory work and the sluggishness in the spreading of uprisings to the failure to include religion as one of the basic rules for organization. According to his estimate, the Hsin-shih P'ing-lin Army was formed in a period of three years. The uprisings near

the end of the Sui Dynasty lasted five years. Similarly, uprisings lasted four years and nine years towards the end of the Tang and Ming Dynasties respectively. After these calculations, he concluded that "if we compare these uprisings with the Huang-chin uprising, it would not be difficult to notice that without religion as one of the organizational factors, it would be practically impossible to shout an order and obtain response from all over the country in the shortest time. On the contrary, it would take a fairly extended period of time for the movement to develop and grow strong" (from An Inquiry Into the Problem of the Peasant Struggle, published by the Hsin Chih-shih /New Knowledge/Ch'u-pan-she). In reality, Comrade Sun Tsu-min's calculations are erroneous; thus his conclusions are inevitably wrong. Following his suggestion, we did some research on the uprisings he mentioned as compared to the Huang-chin uprising. But we discovered at the end of our research that although Huang-chin took in religion as an organizational factor, he, too, had to spend more than ten years on preparatory work to carry out a spontaneous uprising from thirty-six directions in one day. Let us take another example, the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion, which utilized religion quite extensively as an organizational factor. A good seven to eight years of preaching and propaganda work still had to be done to lay the foundation. How then, can we connect the rate of development in the peasants' struggle to religion?

Recently we read another article by Comrade Yang K'uan entitled "Discussions on the Impact of Revolutionary Ideologies and Its Relationship to Religion in the Struggle of the Peasant." We cannot but disagree with a few of Comrade Yang's points of view. For instance, he wrote, "Under the historical conditions at that time, the peasants were unable to organize any political groups in the villages. They were compelled to utilize the existing religious institutions. Religion was the sole form of organization familiar to the peasants. Through religion, the isolated villages and the scattered peasants maintained communication" (from Hsueh-shu Yu-kan, Vol VII, 1960). We believe that this is not consistent with history. We all know that in the history of China, many large-scale uprisings were independent of religion. For instance, the Chen Sheng, Wu Kuang uprising near the end of the Chin Dynasty, the big peasant uprisings near the end of the Wei-han Dynasty and the Sui Dynasty; the Huang Chao, Wang Hsien-chih uprisings near the end of the Tang Dynasty; the Wang Hsiao-po, Li Hsun uprising at the beginning of the Pei-sung Dynasty; the Yeh Liu-liu uprising in the middle of the Ming Dynasty; the Li Tze-ch'eng, Chang Hsien-chung uprising near the end of the Ming Dynasty; the secret societies uprisings in the south during the Tsing Dynasty, and the Nien Army revolution were all large-scale uprisings, yet one of them utilized religion. As to other uprisings on a smaller scale which were independent of religion, they are impossible to enumerate.

Many people believe that it is a special characteristic of the peasants to have a close relationship with religion. Some people say that it is one of the four basic characteristics and some say it is one of the six. We believe that these points are worthy of our consideration. From the above examples of peasant uprisings we can conclude that many of them were independent of any religious factors. Yet most of them were on a large

scale, with excellent organizations. The duration of their uprisings lasted quite long and some of their goals and policies were crystal clear. Compared to the uprisings in the same era which utilized religion, these independent uprisings were not inferior as far as organization is concerned. Some of the peasant uprisings utilized religion, but with subdued religious overtones. Others discarded the outer coating of religion after it served its purpose of consolidating the various forces for uprising. How then, can we say that it is a special characteristic of the peasant's struggle to be closely associated with religion? If someone should make a contradictory conclusion by stating that the characteristic of the peasant's struggle lies in the fact that it is independent of religion, we could still produce more reasons and examples to justify such a statement. But we believe that this association with religion does not stand out as a special characteristic in the struggle of the peasants. In the Chinese feudalistic era (mainly as regards the Han people) Confucianism was the most effective mental weapon in the hands of the governing class. There were other religions which made their contributions to the spiritual field, but none of them were able to displace Confucianism as the main disciplinary force. The emperor was the highest governing power. There were no powerful religious leaders who dared to disagree, nor were there any popes. Generally speaking, since we had no national religions, there never existed a state of Politico-ecclesiastic rule. The religious institutions failed to penetrate into the far corners of society. Religious life was far less important to that of its counterpart in Europe in the daily lives of the people. When we consider this special characteristic of our Chinese history, it would be easier for us to understand why the majority of the peasant struggles were independent of religion.

Everybody knows that the deepest roots of peasant uprisings lies in the exploitative system of feudalism. It is the cruel political oppression and economical exploitation of the peasants by the landlords. The uprisings resulted from the deterioration of class contradictions. Whether peasant uprisings can take place depends solely on the existing revolutionary situation. In The Bankruptcy of the Second International, Lenin pointed out that there were three special characteristics in any revolutionary situation. First, the governing class cannot maintain its own rule. Second, the oppressed class is subjected to exceptional misery. And, third, because of the aforementioned reasons, the active nature of the people is greatly enhanced. We believe that when the above revolutionary situation exists, even without religion as an organizational and recruiting factor, the peasants would still participate in large-scale uprisings. Conversely speaking, should the class contradictions prove to be not too acute, or the opportunity for peasants uprising not ripened, even though religion may be utilized as an organizational or recruiting factor, the peasant uprising cannot possibly take place. Because the function of religion is after all limited. It can neither extinguish the flame of revolution in the people, nor can it cause any revolutionary tide to rise.

#### IV. What Has Been the Function of Religion in the Struggle of the Peasants?

Religion was created by the people and the doctrines of religion are interpreted by the people. Different classes create different religions, and different people under different circumstances would interpret the religious doctrines differently. In the history of the struggle of the Chinese peasants, the peasant class has created its own religions. It has also interpreted the doctrines of the governing class's religions in its own way. We cannot say that such religions are of service to the governing class, as they played an active part in the struggle of the peasants.

First, religion is one form of uniting the peasant in an uprising. For instance, during the last years of the Tung-han Dynasty, the uprising led by the Chang Chao brothers utilized the opportunity of preaching the T'ai-p'ing religion -- "Our brethren and students should be scattered in the four directions in order to carry the word all over the world" -- to cover up their activities. They were able to assemble many followers all over the country. The leaders of the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion -- Hung Hsiu-chuan, Feng Yun-shan, etc. -- also spread their activities under the cover of preaching the gospel. In the Tzu-ching-shan region of Kwangsi Province they organized their revolutionary headquarters and a "worship God" club, and recruited several thousand members. Hung Hsiu-chuan discovered the talents of Yang Hsiu-ch'ing and Shih T'ai-kai, who later became heroic figures in the revolution. The nucleus of the armed uprising was formed there. Of course, this was one way of recruiting force and the function of religion in this case was limited to the time just before the uprising. After the actual armed uprising, peasants from all over the country would respond to this action by coming forward irrespective of religion as a uniting factor. For instance, in the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion, after the Chin-tien incident, and especially during the period of the reinforcement of the Hsiang-nan forces, people from all over the country fought with the T'ai-p'ing army not because they were "God-worshippers." We can almost say that many of the local volunteers who enlisted in the T'ai-p'ing army were quite ignorant of the activities of the "God-worshippers."

Second, religion is a form of organization to precipitate armed uprisings. Take for example the "thirty-six directions" of the Huang-chin revolution. In peaceful times, the "thirty-six directions" was a religious organization, but during the revolution, it became a military organization. The religious leaders became the revolutionary leaders. Other uprisings, such as the Fang Hui uprising, the Chin-tien uprising of the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion and the Boxer movement, were more or less in the same manner. After the outburst of the armed uprisings, and especially during the reinforcement and assault periods, the religious organizations usually were unable to meet the needs of the circumstances and the enlightened leaders would discard the religious organization and substitute for it a purely military organization.

Third, religious teachings were used as a form of propaganda and incitement. For instance, they labelled their own uprisings as an act of God in fulfillment of some religious prophecy. Since it has the blessing



of the divine, the people were more apt to have faith in the revolutionary activities. They also strengthened their internal unity by preaching the common ties of all who worship the same God. All the people became brothers and sisters, and it was their sacred duty to love and help one another. Another example is, that most of the religions taught the people that God watched over every one of them and punished the evil. This was used to teach the people disciplinary action. At times, religions were used to interpret part of their aims and policies. In the T'ien-ch'ao [Celestial Dynasty] land system, we have, "Everybody in this world belongs to the great family of God. No one accepts greed, everything goes toward God. All things are distributed equally. Everyone has sufficient food and clothes to keep him warm. This is the will of God."

When we review these active functions of religion in the struggle of the peasants, we should not forget that the religions utilized by the peasants were, after all, a passive form of conscious superstition. Its interpretation of reality is incorrect, thus its prophecy cannot stand the challenge of realistic experience. The backward, superstitious and passive factors would usually effect the struggle of the peasants, especially during the latter stage of the struggle when victory beclouds the senses. By then, certain weaknesses of the peasant class would suddenly become conspicuous. Religious superstition would feed and develop under such particular circumstances. Its function, then, would be directly opposite to what its function was in the past. The active function in religion would disappear gradually and the passive function would set in and grow in its place.

The most conspicuous example is the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion. Before the Chin-tien uprising, Yang Hsiu-ching proclaimed himself the incarnation of God. With this excuse, he stabilized the situation and strengthened the internal unity of the movement. But after they reached Nanking, the situation changed entirely. The "Incarnation" story became a tool for dictatorship in the hands of Yang. He became the spokesman for God. He turned around and tongue-lashed Hung Hsiu-chuan. He also wanted to horse-whip Hung. Yang demanded that Hung award him the title of "wan-sui" (emperor). This farce was carried to the extreme. From this example we can see that with the "God worshippers" it was the same God they worshipped, and they still believed in the story of incarnation. The spokesman for God was none other but Yang Hsiu-ching, but their effect on the rebellion was altogether different before and after the uprising. Before the initial uprising, religion was a uniting factor. After the uprising, religion encouraged diversification. Before the Chin-tien uprising, the rebels stored all their weapons secretly at Hsi-niu-tan. At the uprising, they obtained their weapons from this pre-arranged hiding place and told the peasants that the weapons were a gift from God. At that moment, religion was used to inspire faith and incite the people to action. Afterwards, during the desperate hours of the siege of the "heaven capital," Hung Hsiu-chuan, under the pretext of receiving divine help, ordered the people to drink morning dew to survive when the city was without food. The situation deteriorated into a hopeless stage, yet Hung persisted in saying, "The army from heaven will pour down like running water." He stubbornly refused a proposal from Li Hsiu-cheng to abandon the city temporarily. Religious superstition in this case confused

Hung's logic. Li Hsiu-cheng commented, "My master does not listen to people any longer. He puts all his faith in the divine spirits. His concern is for the will of the divine, not for secular activities." The younger Hung Hsiu-chuan resolved all problems persistently but later he left all his problems in the hands of God. From this illustration we can see that they were still worshipping the same God and receiving help from the divine. But before the uprising, religion was capable of inciting the people to conflict; after the uprising, the effect was exactly the opposite. Thus, many good opportunities were lost. Furthermore, religion had a passive effect on the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion. For instance, the leaders of the rebellion mistakenly took in foreign aggressors as their friends because of the common form of worship. They also believed in the superstition of destiny prearranged by God. Birth, death, richness and poverty to them were all the will of God. They said such things as, "Generally speaking, richness and poverty are prearranged by heaven," "the people of little wealth should be of service to the people of great wealth," etc. Some comrades believe that Christianity was a positive factor throughout the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion. We conclude that such a theory does not agree with the facts of history.

#### V. What Is the Relationship Between the Religious Doctrines and the Ideology of the Peasant Struggle

In religious doctrines, we often see many moving phrases, such as "peace," "equality," "paradise," "garden of happiness," etc. From the religious point of view, such phrases are nothing but a whiff of the tempting opiate aroma. But to the oppressed people, these are pressing problems which they hope earnestly to resolve. In order to lead the people into their labyrinth, religion posed such attractive problems for the people. At the same time, the people are induced to pray, confess and redeem their souls for happiness in the world beyond. Thus, the people are led astray from the realistic conflicts. Since "peace," "equality," "kingdom of God," etc. are presented as problems, we cannot deny that they did not effect the oppressed people, nor can we say that they did not function to an extent as a revelation factor. Thus, we can see that religious doctrines were used in some peasant struggles. For example, the Fang-la uprising and the peasants uprising during the last years of the Yuan Dynasty utilized the "Mo-ni" religious doctrine of the inevitable triumph of light over darkness and the prophecy of the birth of an enlightened emperor. As a further example, the T'ai-p'ing Movement borrowed the doctrine from Christianity that all were equal in the eyes of God and proposed its own doctrines of equality such as "God the Father is worshipped by one and all; everyone in this world is descended from one family" and "All men on earth are brothers; God looks upon them as his sons." From this point of view, the religious doctrine and the ideology of the peasant struggles does have a certain relationship. But we cannot use this as a conclusion and state that the slogans and goals of the peasant struggles are derived from religious doctrines, nor can we say that religious doctrines incited a torrent of peasant uprisings. Everybody knows



that religion is not capable of cajoling hail and storm, so it cannot out of the clear blue sky incite a torrent of revolutionary uprisings.

On this subject, many like to use the T'ai-p'ing Movement as an illustration. It is true that when Hung Hsiu-chuan created the "God-worshipping" religion, he received a handbook in Kuang-chou entitled Good Words to Persuade the People of This World. This small handbook was written very poorly. It contained a few chapters from the Holy Bible and a few biblical problems, plus several verses on how to spread religious doctrines. It is true that the religious knowledge provided Hung Hsiu-chuan by this small handbook was very limited and poor. Furthermore, some parts of this book were beyond Hung's understanding. Not until 1847 did Hung read the new testament in its entirety, when he learned comparatively more about Christianity. This happened, however, quite late. He started his revolutionary activities long before 1847. His revolutionary ideologies were already matured. He had, by that time, written three important articles entitled "The Original Way of Salvation Song," "The Teachings on Awakening the World by the Original Way," and "The Teachings of the Original Way as the Conscience of the World." In these three articles, he proposed political and economic equality. He advocated the changing of a violent and murderous society into a world of justice and equality. He further wrote hymns of praise to his ideal society. In these three articles he developed many important revolutionary ideologies. We can say that these ideologies became the theoretical foundation of the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion movement. We can see that Hung Hsiu-chuan's revolutionary ideologies matured when his knowledge of religion was still very limited. We can almost say that he had great inspirations long before he had any knowledge of Christianity. He read Good Words to Persuade the People of This World in 1843, but before this he had already composed several revolutionary poems. In the first one he described a dragon hiding in the corners of the sea waiting patiently for the right moment. When the winds and the storms descended from heaven, the dragon, together with the birds in the sky and the beasts on the land from the six-directions, became the master of night and day (over all). In another poem, the first two stanzas read as follows: "With the power of heaven and earth and life and death in my hands, I will eliminate all evil and spare the righteous to wipe out all dissatisfactions of the people." In another verse, he wrote, "With this three-foot sword I stabilize my country, the four seas are my home and we all drink in peace. We capture all devils and witches; they are sent down to hell. North, south, east and west hail the authority of the enlightened ruler; the sun, the moon and the stars sing hymns of victory. The tigers and the dragons are overjoyed at this bright new world where peace reigns over all!" In this poem he proposed the theories of "the four seas being in one family" and "peace and unity reigning all over the world." From this, we may conclude positively that he formed his concise revolutionary ideology before he had any knowledge of Christianity.

Comrade Yang Kuan said in his article "Discussion on the T'ai-p'ing Classics" that because of the limitations of history, "the revolutionary ideologies of the peasants cannot but put on the cloak of religion" (from Hsueh-shu Chou-kan, 1959, Vol IX). In a recent discussion in Shanghai he

also said, "In a feudalistic society it is impossible to forward the theory of atheism to the peasants. Thus, all revolutionary theories must be based on the particular welfare of the peasants with religion as a cloak. There cannot be any other way" (from Hsueh-shu Chou-kan, 1960, Vol VIII). We do not deny that in a feudalistic society supernatural powers do play a very important part in the lives of the peasants. Furthermore, religious teachings do carry with them certain magical attractions. Thus, in some of the uprisings in history many of the slogans and policies were borrowed from religion to strengthen its recruiting power, or religious teachings were used to interpret the revolutionary ideas. Such situations are understandable. But we must never say that this is a common situation, nor can we believe that all the revolutionary theories were based on religious doctrines. Furthermore, we cannot accept Comrade Yang Kuan's conclusion that "there cannot be any other way."

Let us take more examples from the history of China. Wang Hsiao-po's slogan during his uprising was, "There is no equality in poverty and wealth; I will now equalize it for you." This was a purely political slogan with no religious overtones. Also, the proposals forwarded by Li Tzu-cheng during the uprising such as "equalization of land and exemption from tax," "balanced selling and buying," and Chang Hsien-chung's "three-year exemption from the draft" were all devoided of any religious disguise. Also during the T'ai-p'ing Movement, there was the Yunnan uprising led by Li Wen-shan who proposed to "kill all the corrupt officials of the Manchu Dynasty and all the Han land owners" and "let the peasants who work for landowners take over the piece of land on which they work," etc. Such slogans could not be traced to any religious teachings. In the case of the uprisings led by Chung Hsiang and Yang Mo, although they did utilize religion to an extent, their slogan of "equalizing the rich and the poor, the high and the low" was again a purely political slogan with no relationship to any religious doctrines. Again, the Fang-la uprising utilized religion to a degree, but Fang's powerful speech which served to recruit most of his forces was full of revolutionary theories but void of religious overtones. Even in the case of the T'ai-p'ing Movement, where religion played a most dominant role, the major policies such as the land reform program were not based on religious teachings, nor were they coated with religion except for scattered references to "Father in Heaven," "God," "Christ the King," etc. The reason for this is very simple, as no religious doctrine ever advocated the equal distribution of land to the people. Thus, when Comrade Yang Kuan said, "The struggle of the Chinese peasants is a result of the development of the peasants' revolutionary ideology together with religious doctrines" (from "A Discussion on the Relationship Between the Struggle of the Chinese Peasants and Religion by Historians in Shanghai," Jen-min Jih-pao, Peiping, 25 August 1960), we cannot help but disagree with his conclusion.

The relationship between the struggle of the Chinese peasants and religion is quite a complicated problem. There is a need for further study and research. This article merely presents an initial study of the problem. We invite the opinions of everyone.